AN OCEAN TRAGEDY.

THE TERRIBLE FATE WHICH BEFEL THE CENTRAL AMERICA.

A Contest Between Angry Waters and a Bucket Line, In Which the Latter Lost. A Cowardly Engineer—A Bird Guided the Ellen to the Rescue.

And who that remembers can hear without a thrill the name of the steamship Central America, which sank in a great storm on Sept. 12, 1857, with most of her officers and crew, nearly 400 passengers and $1,800,000 in gold?

The Central America was crowded with treasure laden people from California on their way to New York. After leaving Havana on Sept. 8 she ran into a storm. The steamer began to leak, and Captain Hernden called upon the passengers to form lines and pass the buckets. Hour after hour the tempest howled, and the huge vessel groaned as the immense seas broke against her. Hour after hour the men with the buckets toiled for their lives; slowly the water gained on them.

The officers exhorted the bucket gangs not to pause for a moment if the ship was to be saved. The wind roared and the storm increased in fury. Every passenger stuck to his post and worked until he fell to the deck exhausted. Then the women offered to take the places of their wornout, fainting husbands and brothers, but none of the men would allow it. As the horror of the situation gradually dawned on the minds of the women and children the air was filled with sounds of terror, but above the raging hurricane and the cries of lamentation rose the chorus of the bucket men:

Heave, oh! heave, oh! stamp and go,
We'll be jolly blather, oh!

All day long they sang this song and fought for life against the steadily rising water. Mrs. Easton, a bride on her honeymoon trip, passed bottles of wine to the heroic men to strengthen them in their desperate work. All night long the struggle was continued, and still the ocean gained inch by inch. The women begged, with tears in their eyes, to be allowed to help. They cheered the brave fellows and wept when they saw them fall to the deck with white faces and trembling limbs.

During the next day the peril of the steamer was increased by the lack of food and water. The hurricane tossed the sinking hull about and shattered her spars and masts. While the tired and sleepless men stuck to the buckets the women knelt and prayed to God for assistance.

About 2 o'clock in the afternoon a sail was seen to windward. Guns were fired and signals of distress hoisted. The strange vessel, which turned out to be the brig Marine of Boston, answered the signals and tried to approach, but the gale blew her about three miles away.

Then the boats were made ready, and the women and children prepared themselves. They had to strip off nearly all their clothes and put on life preservers. Many of the women had gold, which they could not carry with them. Two of them went to their staterooms and took out bags of $20 gold pieces, which they threw down in the cabin, inviting the others to take what they pleased. The money rolled and jingled about on the floor, while the two weeping women explained that they were returning home to enjoy the fortune which they had made in California, and that they would be beggars if the ship was lost. None of the women dared to take more than two pieces of gold lest it might weigh them down.

The men still remained at their work, saying that they would remain on board until another ship arrived, as the Marine could not take all the passengers, and the women and children must be saved first. Among those heroes was Billy Birch, the famous minstrel.

Two of the lifeboats were smashed by the sea, but three boats were filled with women and children, many of the latter being infants. The last boat to leave carried the chief engineer. He solemnly promised the captain to return, but the moment he got into the boat he drew a knife and threatened to kill any one who followed him. Later on, when the women and children were put on board the Marine, the chief engineer, like the coward and liar he was, refused to return.

Now the sinking steamship was so low in the ocean that almost every wave swept her deck. Some of the passengers got into the rigging, while others tried to build a raft. Night came on. The storm continued to rage. The ship quivered and careened. Rockets soared up into the bellowing, angry heavens. Slowly the vessel filled with water, and the doomed host clinging to her deck and rigging prepared for death. There was no weeping and no shrieking, no wringing of hands. The captain stood at the wheel to the last.

All at once the ship, as if in an agony of death herself, made a plunge at an angle of 45 degrees, and with an appalling shriek from the engulfed mass she disappeared, and nearly 500 human beings were left struggling among the fierce waters. The scene was horrifying, and many who were saved afterward fainted at the mere memory of it.

A few held on to planks and spars all through the wild night, and as the day broke the Norwegian bark Ellen arrived and picked up 49 of the men.

"I was forced out of my course just before I met you," said the captain of the Ellen to the rescued passengers, "and when I altered my course a bird flew across the ship once or twice, and then darted into my face. A few minutes later the bird repeated its movements. I thought it an extraordinary thing, and while thinking on it in this way the mysterious bird reappeared, and for the third time flew into my face. This induced me to alter my course back to the original one, and in a short time I heard noises in the sea and discovered that I was in the midst of shipwrecked people."

Who shall say what power guided the flight of the frail messenger through the stormy air?—New York Herald.

ELECTIONS IN CORSICA.

The Loss of a Life or Two Apparently Not of Much Account.

The elections for the council general were going on all over the island of Corsica. The canton of Soccia comprises several villages, among others Guagno, noted for its famous mineral springs and also for the turbulence of its people. The elections took place in each village, and on the morrow the presidents of the several bureaus were to meet at Soccia for the formal declaration of the poll. In consequence of certain disorders that had already occurred, the mayor of Soccia issued an edict to the effect that none of the inhabitants of Guagno was to enter the village that day.

The inhabitants of Guagno chose to ignore this order, and 60 of them, all armed, and all angry that their candidate had been defeated, marched upon Soccia, headed by their mayor. Two gendarmes—not armed—had been placed at the entrance of the village and warned the advancing troops that they were to come no farther. The mayor of Guagno cried "Fire!" There was a general volley from his followers, and the two gendarmes fell dead. "They both bore excellent characters. One of them had been 24 years in the service, had been proposed for the military medal and leaves a wife and three children."

Such was the first account in the daily paper of Bastia. It occupied about seven inches of one column. The next day the editor had had time to reflect (or he, too, may possibly have had a significant warning), for in an article three inches long the account was somewhat qualified, and there was this important emendation, "It seems we were not correct in stating that it was the mayor of Guagno who gave the order to fire upon the gendarmes."

The third day there were just two lines, "In consequence of the unfortunate affair at Soccia it is probable that the mayor of Guagno will send in his resignation." That was all. I took in the newspaper regularly for a week, for I was curious to see how the affair would end, but there was nothing more—apparently no inquiry, no prosecution of the offenders.—Contemporary Review.

The Tower of Silence.

The Parsees will not burn or bury their dead, because they consider a dead body impure, and they will not suffer themselves to defile any of the elements. They therefore expose their corpses to vultures. One sees nothing but the quiet, white robed procession (white is mourning among the Parsees) following the bier to the Tower of Silence. At the entrance they look their last on the dead, and the corpse bearers—a caste of such—carry it within the precincts and lay it down, to be finally disposed of by the vultures which crowd the tower.

Meanwhile, and for three days after, the priests say constant prayers for the departed, for his soul is supposed not to leave the world till the fourth day after death. On the fourth day there is the Uthanna ceremony, when large sums of money are given away in memory of the departed. The liturgy in use is a series of funeral sermons by Zoroaster.

Of superstitions the Parsees have had more than they retain. Connected with burial is the popular conception as to the efficacy of a dog's gaze after death. Dogs are sacred and supposed to guide the souls of the dead to heaven and to ward off evil spirits; hence it is customary to lead a dog into the chamber of death, that he may look at the corpse before it is carried to the tower.—Nineteenth Century.

Eccentricities In Palaces.

The King of Siam, who, according to late reports, has had a palace constructed which he can submerge in the sea at will and so live under water whenever he chooses, is not the only monarch who has indulged in eccentricities of this sort.

For instance, history has preserved the memory of the ice palace built by the Russian Empress Anne, who punished several of her dainty courtiers by compelling them to pass the night in this great chamber of state, where they were almost frozen to death.

The Czar Paul, ancestor of the present Emperor of Russia, constructed a room formed entirely of huge mirrors, where he spent hours walking to and fro in full uniform—a singular taste for the ugliest man in Russia.

One of the native princes of Java cooled his palace by making a stream fall in a cascade over the gateway, and the Indian despot Tippo Sahib placed beside his dinner table a life size figure of a tiger devouring an English officer, the roar of the beast and the shrieks of the victim being imitated by hidden machinery.—Harper's Young People.

Triple Pillar Saw Frame.

Among the recent mechanical constructions of note is a triple pillar saw frame, conveniently designed to occupy a space not much wider than an ordinary vertical log frame. In carrying out this plan the cross girder, which carries the saw frame and the crank shaft bearings, is in one piece, the whole being supported on three turned pillars, on which by means of screws connected by suitable gearing they are raised and lowered together. In order to limit the distance between the pillars as much as possible, the connecting rod is attached to the saw frame that is farthest from the crank shaft. There is a bell crank and flywheel at each end of the crank shaft, which enable the machine to work steadily at high speeds without excessive vibration.—New York Sun.

One For the Turk.

One of the stories that drifted out of the plaisance is of the mosque where prayers were said daily at regular intervals for the natives. A pious woman passing accosted a young Oriental and chatted with him, finishing with a nod toward his prayer house and the remark, "I hope you go to church every Sunday, like a Christian." "No," was the quick reply, "I go every day, like a Turk"—which must score one for the heathen.—New York Times.